

REAL ESTATE- ON THE BLOCK- Reworked: Upgrades make Orange Craftsman glow (abridged)

By Sarah Jacobson |
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Address: 16487 Constitution Highway

Neighborhood: Spotswood in Orange County

Asking: \$679,000

Year Built: 1948

Size: 2,300 finished square feet, 250 unfin.

Land: 3.15 acres



Throughout are elements that enhance the home's original look and function. For instance, the built-in dining room cabinet has lighting within and deep roll-out drawers for convenient access to extra dishes. On a narrow cupboard in the bathroom, the door folds out so as not to bump the sink and an outlet installed inside the cupboard accommodates a hairdryer. The original sky-blue tile on the bathroom walls remains, and a waterfall shower, new heated floor tile, and a warming towel bar don't overpower the original vibe. All in all, these details make life in an older house smarter while maintaining the '40s charm.

Some clever new upgrades fit so well that they seem like they've always been part of the house. In the living room, an intricate tray ceiling with stained glass and mahogany detailing fits the Craftsman style and adds gravitas to the living room. Tumbled Carrera marble fireplace, illuminated shelving, and a 119-inch retractable theater screen with five-way surround sound don't hurt either. In the dining area, a pyramid skylight is architectural and adds light.

Many original details remain, from the redwood trim and doors with Deco brass handles to a dual laundry chute that allows the washerwoman to separate whites and colors. Other details have been repurposed. A grindstone from the property is now a part of the patio. Where possible, the owners used stone quarried from the property.

Another characteristic of the style are the vistas from inside and out. In the living room, the expanse of windows cleverly hides the top or bottom of the view and gives visitors the feeling of being in the canopy. In the kitchen, buyers get a similar view of the backyard and pond. As with most homes of this style, the bedrooms are small, private spaces while most of life happens in the larger, shared living spaces. If not large, each of the three bedrooms is bright with multiple windows.

The small finished basement houses frontloading washer and dryer and an extra fridge. A corrugated metal ceiling gives an industrial feel and function (the plumbing is easily accessed). Removable walls divide the room; the current owner uses the small side space as a sound studio, but it could be a very private office, storage area, or the walls could be easily removed to restore the room to its original size. A second full bath is another addition.

Outside, the upgrades continue. A dry pond bed was refilled and stocked with four species of fish that share space with a few big turtles and the occasional (live) grey, blue, or green heron while a fountain in the pond lights two heron statues. Fruit trees (peaches, apples, cherries, pears) and berry bushes are well established, and the barn looks new.

This property is really for nature lovers looking for a retreat from the city who don't mind a commute. It's a smart house layered with light.

PHOTOS BY SARAH JACOBSON

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